

WASHINGTON, DC- Today, Congressman Jim Costa (D-Fresno) announced that small, non-farm businesses in Fresno, Kings, Madera, and Tulare Counties are now eligible to apply for low-interest disaster loans from the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA). These loans are to help businesses offset the financial losses caused by the drought in the San Joaquin Valley .

Small, non-farm businesses, small agricultural cooperatives and most private, non-profit organizations of any size may qualify for Economic Injury Disaster Loans (EIDLs) of up to \$2 million to help meet financial obligations and operating expenses which could have been met had the disaster not occurred.

By law, SBA makes EIDLs available when the US Secretary of Agriculture designates an agricultural disaster. Secretary Tom Vilsack recently declared this disaster at the request of Governor Schwarzenegger.

Information and application forms are available from SBA's Customer Service Center by calling 1-800-659-2955, emailing disastercustomerservice@sba.gov , visiting SBA's Web site at www.sba.gov/services/disasterassistance , or contacting Costa's Fresno district office at 559-495-1620. Hearing impaired individuals may call 1-800-877-8339.

The deadline to apply for these loans is February 26, 2010.